

Remarks of Lisbeth Dizney Kurjiaka
Fifth grade teacher
Weston Public Schools

Before the Education Committee
On Senate Bill 24, Section 31
teacher salaries based on certification

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee.

My name is Lisbeth Dizney Kurjiaka, and I'm a fifth grade teacher in Weston. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 31.

Basing teacher salaries on certification undermines the importance of, well, education! In doing this, the proposed bill devalues advanced degrees that teachers earn to improve their skills. Even more shocking is how the bill eliminates the requirement for a master's degree, except for the master teacher certificate level. Not only does the lack of requirement for a master's degree for a professional certificate suggest lower salaries for teachers, but it opens the doors for teachers without a high level of skill. I have news for you: educators must be educated in order to educate.

By basing salary schedules on the governor's new certification levels, not education and experience as is done now, we are creating lower standards for our teachers and, consequently, our children. These new certification levels will allow greater numbers of inexperienced teachers into our schools teaching our children. Inexperience would serve as an incentive for Boards of Education to set lower salaries for teachers. Without competitive salaries, districts will no longer be able to recruit the best and the brightest. In fact, the best and the brightest will no longer go into the field of education.

How do I know? I'm one of the best and the brightest that chose the path of education. I graduated with honors as both a Nutmeg and University Scholar from the University of Connecticut. At the time of my hire, I had two undergraduate degrees, my master's degree, and additional graduate level credits. Understanding that salaries were based on education and experience, I didn't have to sacrifice my dreams or standard of living for a job I love. Teaching, as it is now,

allows me to live comfortably while making a difference in people's lives.

I would like to urge the committee to reconsider teacher salaries based on certification and keep salaries based on experience and level of education. Don't lose the best and the brightest. Don't let those who can't do teach. Continue to demand that educators be educated in order to educate. Thank you.